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RAVEN ON THE TABLES

W-E-LOVE



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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

The Day's Work Series

GRAVEN ON THE TABLES

BY
WILLIAM EWING LOVE



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Colonial Press

Electrotyped and Printed by C. H. Simonds & Co.
Boston, U. S. A.

PREFACE.

WHILE convalescing from a severe illness in April, 1899, the author, in quest of occupation for hand and mind during his enforced indoor stay, was impressed by a foot-note to Bacon's Essay on Riches: "He that maketh haste to be rich, shall not be innocent." This is a quotation from Proverbs xxviii. 20. The story printed on the following pages was at once begun and was finished during the week following. In the ensuing July the manuscript was sent to *The Coming Age*, at Boston, and was promptly accepted by Editor B. O. Flower, to be paid for on publication. Several months having elapsed and the story not yet having appeared in print, the author grew impatient and requested the return of the manuscript. He then at once proceeded to publish it personally, doing all the work himself, mechanical and otherwise. Its success as a privately printed booklet encouraged the author to submit the story to the Boston publishing house whose imprint it now bears.

"Graven on the Tables" is dedicated to men like N. O. Nelson, of St. Louis, and Mayor Jones, of Toledo. It is offered for the perusal of no class or organizations, but for the great mass of toilers who bear the burdens and sustain the earth.

WILLIAM EWING LOVE.

St. Louis, May, 1900.

GRAVEN ON THE TABLES.

JOHN HARDICORN strode heavily into the sparsely furnished kitchen his family called home, and impatiently flung his luncheon can upon the clothless table. After a moment of dogged silence, he said to his thin-faced wife, who sat monotonously rocking a sick infant :

“Well, Mary, I’m laid off again, for two weeks this time. It’s that, or look for another place, — so the foundry foreman told us to-day.”

“It can’t be helped, John,” the wife resignedly replied. “We can only do for the best, — that’s all, — and not worry too much.”

“And what’s worse,” added the iron-worker, apparently unheeding his wife’s answer, “our pay is to be cut down fifteen cents on the dollar the first of December, — two weeks from now. We got notice to-day. All the men are out of heart and in ugly temper. We’ve stood lay-offs — eighty men at a time — every five weeks for the past six months. And we haven’t growled. This lay-off will be seven weeks lost time for me since May. And still I don’t grumble at that. But to go back to work at thirty cents the day less, — that’s too much. With a wife and four children to

feed, and already in debt at the company store — I can't stand it — and, what's more, I won't! No more will the others!"

"Don't do anything rash, John," soothingly cautioned the patient wife. "Remember winter is coming, and we're not prepared. The baby's sick; the others need shoes and clothes; and, as you say, we owe for things at the store. Besides, I'm not well. Be careful, John, and make the best of what you might make worse."

"That's what we've been doing for months," testily broke in Hardicorn. "We've been making much of mighty little. And we've been patient, too. But patience has worn out —

"But how's the baby, Mary?" anxiously queried the father, abruptly turning from his complaining mood. "Did the doctor come?"

"Yes, John, but — I might as well tell you — he said: 'You should have called me sooner, Mrs. Hardicorn. You have a very sick child.' That was all he said; but his tone meant more. I don't believe our baby'll get well, John. The doctor wrote a prescription. There it is — I had no money to send to the drug-store till you brought your wages home."

Hardicorn bent above his baby, gazed yearningly into the wan, pinched face, solicitously noting the shortly heaving breast, and sighed deeply.

"For its sake, for sake of the others, for your sake, Mary," he said in a broken voice, "I'll try to be patient."

Though of rough exterior, and earning a livelihood as

an iron-molder, John Hardicorn was a man of tender sensibilities and some education. In the first years of his manhood he had been a licensed Baptist preacher ; and, in a humble way, he had followed that calling till sheer necessity forced him to seek more remunerative employment. By reason of early training and associations, he, more than any other, perhaps, of the four hundred men employed in the Hadleyton Iron and Steel Works, felt the sting of Marcus Hadley's late ungenerous treatment of his workmen.

At the end of two weeks John Hardicorn went back to work, but with little lightness of heart ; for his baby had been put away in a humble corner of the town cemetery, and his burden of debt had been added to by burial expenses and a doctor's bill. Moreover, the mother, who had not been strong since the baby's birth, showed evidence of rapid break-down. She had been a brave little woman, a faithful wife, and a self-denying mother. For a year and a half past she had borne up against aches and pains and fits of weakness, and cared for her husband, her children, and her home as can only the poor, whose hearts are drawn closely together by deprivation and narrow living. But now that the baby was dead, and the maternal strain had somewhat relaxed, John could plainly see she daily grew frailer.

When the reduction in wages at the Iron-works went into effect the lay-off plan was discontinued. The entire plant resumed operation, with a full complement of men, an even four hundred (not counting Harmon Hill, the

general foreman). Two or three large orders had come in, and others were expected ; so there was prospect for running steadily.

But, notwithstanding the promise for larger aggregate earnings (even at the cut-down) than enjoyed since spring, there was general discontent among the men. During the just past seven months they had acquiesced in the lay-off plan in a spirit of coöperation with their employer and with each other. "During business stagnation," they said among themselves, "there is little demand for such iron products as we make ; and when the demand is small it naturally follows there is scarcity of work. But this cutting down of wages and running full time is quite another matter." To them it savoured more of increased profits to the mill-owner than of a generous wish to give all hands work at a living wage. The more intelligent figured out that it was more profitable to operate an entire plant (at even smaller net returns than usual) than to allow part of the machinery to lie idle, eaten by rust and rot, and tying up, at no interest income, money invested. And they felt confident Marcus Hadley had recently been doing the same sort of figuring, and that resumption by the whole plant had resulted solely from these calculations. In a word, the men felt sure they were being made victims to the greed of avarice. It looked like fair dealing when they were paid standard wages, though not allowed to work full time ; but quite a different phase was put upon the situation, when all their time was required at a fifteen per cent. reduction.

The discontent and discussion and agitation grew apace, and, in less than three weeks, brought about a call for a mass-meeting, to settle upon a plan of action. At this meeting the men were not long in unanimously deciding to demand a return to the old wage scale. They were divided, however, on the proposition to strike, should their demand not be acceded. The contention was spirited and obstinate. Among those who pleaded for moderation was John Hardicorn. In the course of his speech he said :

“Men, the day this cut in wages was announced my wife said to me : ‘John, be careful, and make the best of what you might make worse.’ That set me a-thinking ; and, even if the advice did come from a woman, I believe it’s good. Our wives at home often see things at a standpoint differing from ours ; but, when it comes to the bread-winning question, I believe they’re pretty clear-sighted. (“You’re right there, John Hardicorn,” spoke up a big charcoal heaver.) Now, men, it’s true that many of us here to-day have worked around this plant for years, some of us fifteen, and a few as long as twenty. I went to work for Mark Hadley — right here, under this casting-shed — twenty-one years ago last April. Then the whole works weren’t much bigger than the horseshoeing shop is to-day. All of us have seen Mark Hadley get rich, and richer ; while we, well, we have had enough, and tried to be contented. (“Because we had to,” growled a hoarse-voiced puddler.) We can’t all be rich, you know, men ; there’d be nobody left to do the work. (“That’s the milk in the cocoanut, John

Hardicorn," chimed in a muscular off-bearer.) We've heard Mark Hadley brag that he had the most skilful and most faithful workmen in the States. He's poked some of us in the ribs and said these things in the presence of visitors to the Iron-works. ("Who might become buyers," interrupted a molder.) And he's put us in a jolly humour with him, ourselves, and everybody. ("Because it paid," sneered a mill foreman.) He has made us feel like we were part of the firm and all of the works. ("Sly old fox!" commented a thin blacksmith.) He has built us houses and allowed us moderate rent. ("And still made a neat profit," broke in a lank carpenter.) He has given us credit at the company store. ("To our sorrow!" ejaculated a poor sand-wheeler.) He has presented us turkeys at Christmas — when times were good. ("You bet — when times were good!" came the echo.) But, somehow, he has got richer all the time. He has built a church, and is a Methodist deacon. ("Hypocrite! Hypocrite!" shouted several voices, in chorus.) He has been a leader in many movements for this town's advancement. ("And his own!" snapped a turner.) He's a man of consequence in this community; and he'll have the sympathy of the people of Hadleyton; and that'll strengthen him, stiffen his back, in a fight with us. ("We'll break his back — or his head!" yelled a rabid strike advocate.) We've never before felt cause for a serious quarrel with Mark Hadley ("He had yer hypnertised!" called out a small boy in the crowd); but we all know he's a man of determination, even obstinate ("As a pig!" agreed

a big machinist) when he thinks he's right. ("And that's all the time!" somebody added.) Mark Hadley thinks he has good reasons for this cut in wages; and if we start a fight with him, we'll get whipped — for he'll never give in. Then let us go slowly. Let us have a care for those dependent on us, who may have to suffer. ("That's what we're here for!" shouted a prospective strike leader.) If we must make a demand for the old wages, let us not make threats. Let us leave a bridge open for retreat, should we find —"

"Coward!" hissed a hot-headed strike factionist.

"Who's a coward?" yelled a friend to Hardicorn.

"You! You weak-kneed, milk-and-water, mamma's-apron-string boy!" came the defiant response.

"I'll teach you different, you blackguard!" was howled back.

And the two burly iron-workers, white with rage, struggled through the dense crowd to get at each other.

Great confusion ensued; and, amid a tumult of shouts and hisses and cat-calls, John Hardicorn left the box on which he had stood while speaking.

For some minutes a general fight was threatened; but quiet was finally restored, and the meeting proceeded. Other speakers joined Hardicorn in pleading for moderation; but they were overborne by the opposition. And it was decided to strike, as a last resort.

Marcus Hadley, sole proprietor of the Hadleyton Iron and Steel Works, founder and patriarch of the town of Hadleyton, deacon and main pillar in the local

Methodist church, president of the town's one banking-house, and landlord of half the country round, sat in his private office Monday morning, December 18th, in consultation with his general foreman, Harmon Hill. They had been discussing the iron-workers' demands and strike ultimatum.

"And so they will walk out if we don't restore the old wage scale?" queried the iron-master.

"So I regret to say," answered the foreman. "I was so informed by a committee yesterday."

"Well," calmly announced the square-jawed foundryman, after a moment's cogitation, "we must consider this alternative: Shut down, or *be* shut down. We cannot now afford to pay the old wages. During the past eight months our profits have been small enough. With a full complement of men at work and the former scale in force, we could not hope to more than meet running expenses."

"I think we might hope to do better, sir," the foreman suggested.

"I say not!" emphatically reiterated Hadley. "I have figured it out to a cent—and to my entire satisfaction."

"Well, admit we only meet expenses," pleaded Hill. "Will it not be better to let the men earn bread for their families—besides saving the machinery from rust and rot, for nobody's benefit?"

"If the men want bread for their families, they now have fair means to earn it," coldly responded the iron magnate.

“Furthermore,” added the foreman, “if we shut down, our best men will seek employment elsewhere. We can’t afford to lose them.”

“We’ll not lose ’em,” chuckled the patriarch of Hadleyton. “They’re so much at home here they’ll hesitate a long time before going away. And they’ll come to their senses on sober thought. We’ll help them a little in that direction. Many of them are in our debt at the store. These we’ll choke off at once. The rest must pay as they buy. No more credit orders, Hill. Then, when the larder gets empty, they’ll talk reason. Now, as I said before, Hill, it looks like a case of shut down, or *be* shut down. So we’ll not be caught napping. We’ll take the bull by the horns without dilly-dally. You must post notices to-morrow: that the whole plant will be closed indefinitely at two o’clock next Sunday night—or, rather, Monday morning. Make the notice strong against trespassers, for some of the more turbulent and vindictive may attempt arson or other violence. Pay all the men off at 10 o’clock Monday forenoon, as usual—By the way, Monday is Christmas! Well, let it be. This will be a rather sad Christmas gift to the men. Eh, Hill? However, they’ve brought it on themselves. It’ll teach a valuable lesson, which some of them sorely need.”

And so the edict to close down went forth.

“But he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent.”¹—*Proverbs xxviii. 20.*

¹ Also translated *unpunished*.

Thus impressively read the pastor of the Hadleyton Methodist church at the usual Sabbath morning services the day before Christmas.

“By these words,” commented the preacher, “King Solomon condemned, in no uncertain terms, avarice in the wealthy. Between the lines we read solemn pronouncement of a penalty against the rich man who grinds the poor.

“This is a period of the piling up of great fortunes, an era of combinations and trusts, and of gains far in excess of the reasonable earning power of capital. Is it any wonder, then, that these heapings of wealth have their corresponding depressions of want and squalor? The many are deprived, enslaved, debased, to contribute to the lifting on high, the luxury, ay, the *prodigality*, of the few. And King Solomon saith :

“ ‘ The destruction of the poor is their poverty.’ ”

“Do we, in this nineteenth century of Croesus building, ever stop to ponder on how much of crime among the poor is traceable to the insatiate avarice of the rich? Jean Valjean became a burglar, a galley convict, a hounded outlaw, through necessity of bread for dependent little ones. Yet, this man was not a degenerate. His very act of breaking a shop window and taking therefrom a loaf to feed the starving innocents stamps him as of noblest sentiment and impulse. The press of to-day teems with items of theft, burglary, highway robbery, and, alas! murder — committed, in many instances, by unfortunates who had never before

broken a statute law. Who can gainsay scores of these crimes are primarily instigated by want and a sense of oppression? Self-preservation is the first law of nature. If a man cannot live by fair means, he feels he must resort to foul. This is dangerous doctrine, but it is not immoral teaching, because it is *truth*; and truth is *never* immoral. Many of the unsuccessful in the lowlier walks of life in time come to be imbued, in a sinister way, with the idea, that the world owes them a living. And are they far wrong? When such men are denied the privilege, the God-given right, to honestly earn bread, the step to crime is short. And are they more to be condemned than those others in the upper atmosphere who live 'in the sweat of another man's brow?' Is the man who annually piles away in strong vaults surplus gains, by tens and hundreds of thousands, more every year than he and his can hope to temperately consume in their generation, — is he less to be condemned than the skulking wretch who, impelled by want, hides his face behind a mask, creeps into a shop at the dead hours of night, and takes from the money drawer a few dollars? The one hath taken his tens, the other his *tens of thousands*. Are the colossal returns on money, machinery, and personal energy of the great manufacturer and emporium merchant, employing hundreds at meagre wages, not more than fair interest on capital and liberal salary for individual services? The common people too well know the answer.

"And is this America, 'the home of the brave and the land of the free,' where industrial serfdom should

for ever fear to plant its cloven hoof? Is this the land our forefathers wrested from the avarice of a foreign tyrant? Is this the soil baptised and consecrated to freedom and equality and brotherhood in the blood of the slain at Lexington and Concord and Bunker Hill and in the crimson stains on the snows at Valley Forge? O my brethen, are we worthy descendants of those horny-handed yeomen who rose up and shook off the degrading yoke of a maternal government which oppressed its poor?

“ ‘ But he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent.’

“ Would it were possible to blazon these words in letters of flame over the portal to every mill, every foundry, every factory, and above the gateway to every mart of manufacture and trade throughout our fair land! Would it were expedient for these words of wisdom to meet the eye of the maker and the merchant wherever he turn till their eternal import should burn deep into his soul! Behold, O men of wealth and affairs, the handwriting on the wall! Behold and heed! Lest your kingdom of riches be taken from you and divided, as was Belshazzar’s among the Medes and the Persians.

“ The luxury and the license and the riotous living of the aristocracy of France reached its climax just before those days of reckoning when the pavements of Paris were spattered with human blood; just before that reign of terror when the Frenchman who disclaimed the appellation of Citizen placed his head in the

shadow of the guillotine. But from those nights of gloom too long unhappy France emerged to the rosy dawn of industrial freedom.

“The French Revolution was a revolt of the impoverished masses against the aristocratic classes born from and perpetuated by dishonest wealth. It was the rending in rage of a king and a government selfishly devoted to a caste founded in riches. It was a merciless, pitiless, godless rebuke of a religion catering to passions and lusts and profligacies of a rank having its root in mammon. That caste, so disastrous to France a hundred years ago, permeates society, government, and religion in this country to-day. Its face may appear different, but its heart is the same.

“Just before those terrible days in France Mirabeau sounded this note of warning: ‘Beware! There is contagion in passionate movements!’ Translated into the language of our times and conditions, these words signify: ‘Beware of the strike, the riot, the mob!’ Crush the mob? But who in America shall dare to crush the mob? Who shall assay to stay the surging torrents, when the long pent-up and overswollen reservoirs of popular wrath shall have burst their dams? And this sweeping away of conventionalisms may not be afar off. *The blood spilled where Warren fell still swells the veins of America’s industrial millions.*

“The handwriting has been graven on the wall. He who runs may read. My brethren, there will verily come a time for reckoning. If not here, which seemeth sure, then in the hereafter. If the Lord of Justice and Com-

passion see it not meet to punish the oppressor of the poor by agencies on the earth, then must the man of many talents give a strict accounting at the Bar of Judgment. My brethen, I exhort you, yield unto the poor full justice; then give unto them from the heaped up stores you have garnered with their assistance. Think not to appease a generous God and ease a gnawing conscience by noble bequests to charity and the church in your wills. That immortal Englishman, Sir Francis Bacon, wrote nearly three hundred years ago: 'Defer not charities till death; for certainly, if a man weigh it rightly, he that doth so is rather liberal of another man's than of his own.'

"To-morrow we shall hail with ringing of bells and merry-making and great joy the anniversary of our Saviour's birth. 'Peace on earth, good will to men,' shall be our dominating impulse. Then, let us go forth and seek out our less fortunate brother, and render him justice, and offer him good cheer, and bid him be joyful with us. King Solomon saith:

" 'The rich and the poor shall meet together; the Lord is the maker of them all.'

"We are of one blood. Then, let us to-morrow bring it so to pass that, in the days to come, the poor among us shall join with the poet in singing:

" 'Then pealed the bells more loud and deep;
God is not dead; nor doth he sleep!
The Wrong shall fail,
The Right prevail,
With peace on earth, good will to men.' "

Well up toward the altar, close beneath the preacher's pleading voice and earnest eyes, sat Marcus Hadley and his daughter Gabrielle. But if the minister's words awoke more than ordinary emotions in the stocky foundryman's breast, his immobile face did not betray him. His daughter, however, was weeping softly when her pastor ceased speaking. From her early girlhood she had been a sympathetic and helpful friend to the poor of Hadleyton. While her father had utilised their brawn and brain to increase his thousands, she had studied their conditions and needs and had planned and worked for their relief. In this she had earnestly tried to enlist the coöperation of her matter-of-fact father, but had met sorry success.

"Such things are well enough for women," he once said; "but for men, — well, they have their business to attend. If you choose to spend much of your time and pin-money in that way, I have no objections; but I can't be expected to spare valuable time, to say nothing of throwing money around where it will foster both idleness and consequent improvidence."

So Gabrielle had done what she could without his assistance, grieving at his indifference.

That Sabbath afternoon, while Gabrielle was walking home from Sunday school, in which she was, as it were, the patron saint, a little daughter of one of the mill hands came up to her and sorrowfully said:

"Miss Gabrielle, Tillie Hardicorn's mother died this morning; and that's why Tillie wasn't at Sunday school."

“That is very sad news,” responded Gabrielle. “I shall go over there at once.”

When Gabrielle knocked at the door of John Hardicorn’s humble home, she was admitted by little Tillie, sobbing as if her heart would burst. Hardicorn sat by the bed where lay his dead wife, and gazed vacantly at the thin white face. Like a man of stone he sat, taking no notice of the visitor’s entrance. None of the neighbours had yet come in; and the only other occupants of the room, Tillie’s two little brothers, crouched in a corner, awe and fear mingled on their faces. They were too young to realise the full import of that mysterious event which had brought so much sorrow to their sister, and had made their father so queer and still. In a childish, undefined sense they felt their mother had gone away — somewhere, but they could not yet understand she would never come again.

“Father is so strange,” Tillie said, between her sobs. “He hasn’t said a word since mother died — just sat there and held her hand. And he stares so.”

Gabrielle quietly approached the sorrow-stricken husband and gently touched him on the shoulder. Hardicorn slowly turned in his chair, and for a full minute gazed stolidly up into the young woman’s sympathetic face. Suddenly he awoke from his seeming half-catalepsy.

“Mark Hadley’s daughter here!” he exclaimed. “Go! Leave my house! Did he send one of his tribe here to mock me — in the presence of my dead?”

“You misunderstand,” soothingly answered Gabrielle. “I was her friend, and I come as your friend —”

“My friend? Mark Hadley’s daughter my friend! Why, girl, he has robbed me and mine of bread! His avarice killed my babe and the mother of my children.”

“Pray do not say that, sir,” pleaded Gabrielle.

“I do say it! And I say it again!” savagely reiterated the iron-worker. “It’s all his doings. My baby died because we didn’t have a doctor and medicine in time. The poor must wait for these things till sure they’re needed. Then, often, it’s too late. This, and worry, and hard work, and need of right food has killed my wife, too. Why didn’t they have these things, and in time? I was always willing to work, and did work when they’d let me. Why didn’t my baby and its mother have these things? Ask Mark Hadley. And yet he’s not satisfied. He comes now and casts me out at the beginning of winter — robs my motherless children of bread, of fire, of shelter. God help me and them! And may God have mercy on Mark Hadley’s soul!”

“Do not say such cruel things to me about my father,” again pleaded Gabrielle, her face white with horror at Hardicorn’s vehement denunciation. “If he has seemed to have wronged you, remember I am your friend. I have always been the friend of your children and of your wife, now lying there dead. I am blameless of injustice you may impute to him. If you have suffered because of his seeming indifference, let me make some amends.”

“No, girl! But I don’t blame you, however. Still, I can’t accept favours from you. Go home, and tell your father what I say.”

With a face ashen pale, Gabrielle hurried from the presence of death, and sorrow, and hate, to her luxurious home. She had no mother to cheer her, having been robbed by death of maternal solace early in her girlhood. So she sought the privacy of her bed-chamber and confided in her Heavenly Father. She prayed long and earnestly that God would soften the heart of her father toward those unfortunates who, under the orders posted by Foreman Hill, would that night be deprived of employment.

Until far in the night that Christmas eve Marcus Hadley tossed on his bed and could not sleep. When he lay down the words of the preacher rang in his ears. He listened to the souging of the cold December winds outside and to the pitiless rattle of the sleet against the pane. He reviewed his hard life in boyhood. He recalled the privations and unremitted toil and frugality in his early manhood. He remembered when fortune first began to smile and the foundation for his present wealth was laid. Then his mind travelled up the succeeding years, during which his business had steadily grown, till he had become a rich man. Then the preacher’s words again echoed in his ears. Had he been eating his bread in the sweat of another man’s brow? He recalled that for twenty years he had paid his men what most employers con-

sidered fair wages, and they had seemed satisfied. Their handiwork had come to command a premium in the iron and steel markets; and he boasted that this was due as much to their loyalty to him as to his careful selection of them. However, hard times had come, demand had temporarily almost ceased, money had appreciated, prices had fallen; and, like many other large concerns in his line, he had *felt* justified in reducing wages. But had he *been* justified? he asked himself. Were the preacher's words applicable to him? Could the pleading of this man of God have been actuated by mere emotion, pity at sight of sickness and want, or could he have been impelled to speak thus by a sense of right and justice as between man and his fellows?

At length, through sheer fatigue of tossing and worry, the iron magnate fell asleep—a troublous dreamful sleep.

Marcus Hadley died. Resurrection Day came. With the reincarnate hosts he rose from his earthy bed, beneath an imposing shaft in the aristocratic cemetery, and winged his way to the outer plains before the gate to the Celestial Land. There he awaited final judgment for the deeds done in the body. In the midst of the plain, on a great white throne, refulgent with strange light, which could not be looked upon without momentary blindness, sat the Supreme Judge of all the earth. On the right of the throne stood an angel of great stature and majesty, holding in his two hands, high uplifted before the people, two

tables of stone, like unto those given to Moses on Mount Sinai. And the angel cried with a loud voice :

“Behold ! Behold ! Behold ! O ye peoples of all the earth ! Read ye the words writ on the tables ! By them ye shall be judged ! For they have been the law of righteousness from the beginning ! Every man’s conscience shall be quickened ! Ye who look, read and understand shall each be unto himself his own judge ! They that be innocent shall pass beyond the Throne and enter through the narrow gate to the Kingdom of Righteousness ! They that perceive themselves as guilty shall pass back into Outer Darkness ! Behold ! Behold ! Behold ! O ye peoples of all the earth !”

And Marcus Hadley lifted up his eyes and looked. And he saw but these words, graved in deep letters on the tables :

BUT HE THAT MAKETH HASTE TO BE RICH
SHALL NOT BE INNOCENT.

In shame, he covered his face with his hands and, with bowed head, slunk from the presence of the Great White Light. Suddenly the solid earth of the plain was no longer beneath his feet ; and, with a shriek of remorse and despair, he plunged downward into a boiling, seething, smothering Gulf of Night. Down — down — down —

The iron-master awoke with a gasp and a start and a sense of having fallen from a great height. Clammy moisture stood on his forehead.

“Ugh! What a frightful dream!” he said, half aloud.

Then he lay still and thought for fully ten minutes. After this mental exercise, with the air of having arrived at a decision on some perplexing question, he quietly slipped out of bed, struck a match, looked at his watch, and, with a breath of relief, murmured :

“Not yet two o’clock — there’s still time.”

He hastily put on his clothing and great-coat, and hurriedly left the house. Outside the chill air was still thick with falling sleet, which rattled dismally against the bare tree boughs, the shrubbery and the frozen earth. Looking toward the foundry, Hadley, however, could see the dim glow of the furnace fires. They were still in blast. Quickly making his way to the office, he arrived at the moment Foreman Hill was coming out to issue final instructions for closing down the plant.

“Don’t draw the fires, Hill,” Hadley said, quietly. “Keep enough men from this shift to hold the furnaces in blast, till further orders. When you pay off in the morning tell all hands to meet me at half-past ten o’clock, in the big casting-shed. I want to talk to them.” Then the iron magnate walked home, returned to bed, and slept soundly till far in the morning.

The foreman was puzzled by his latest instructions ; but, by long association with Marcus Hadley, he had learned to ask no questions when his employer issued contradictory orders. The message was delivered to the men, and they were as much perplexed as Hill. However, well in advance of the time named, they were

gathered beneath the great shed, waiting, in a hopeless, though still defiant mood.

Promptly on time, Marcus Hadley, carrying a small, though apparently well-filled leathern satchel, and accompanied by Foreman Hill, made his appearance. Mounting the platform of one of the broad weighing scales, he set the satchel on a box at his left, and addressed the men thus :

“Boys, on second thought, we’ve decided not to shut down. We’re going to keep right on running. And what’s better, we’re going back to the old wage scale. Right now, beginning with to-day. Now, I want all of you to go right along, in your old places, just as though no hitch between us had occurred. And now, in remembrance of auld lang syne, and as a pledge of renewed friendship and good faith between me and you, I want every man of you to step up here and shake hands with me. We’ll hold a little Christmas Day reception, as it were.”

Hadley moved to the edge of the scales platform and stretched out his right hand invitingly.

But the men were not quick to respond. They held back. For the sullen anger and distrust engendered by their employer’s late course were not yet quite dissipated. A murmur of approval and some faint applause had followed the announcement of continued work at better wages, instead of a lock-out ; but these brawny muscle-proud men found it hard to forgive and forget on such short notice.

At length, having awaited the hesitation of the men

till the situation was growing embarrassing, Hadley turned to the foreman, and said :

“Call the pay-roll, Hill.”

“Anderson, Timothy H.,” read the foreman, from the roll-book he had brought under his arm.

Timothy was one of the old hands and had been very conservative throughout the late troubles ; but, to stand well with his work-mates, he, like many others, had held aloof from a too hasty reconciliation with the mill-owner for that reason.

“Anderson, Timothy H.,” again called the sonorous voice of the foreman.

Timothy started, as if just awakened from a doze in church, and then, more from years of habit on pay-day than other impulse, the big machinist strode forward. As he neared the platform Hadley reached out his right hand and grasped Timothy’s left. Then, after a quick dive with his disengaged hand into the leathern satchel, he clapped a bright ten-dollar gold piece into the open palm of the surprised workman, exclaiming :

“There, Timothy, take that home to your wife and children, and tell ’em you still have a job, and that this is Marcus Hadley’s Christmas present.”

He released Timothy’s hand ; and, holding aloft another inviting gold piece, shouted :

“Now, come on, boys ! There’s a shiner here for every man of you. Call the roll, Hill.”

“Arkins, Thomas,” announced the foreman.

Timothy Anderson had broken the ice. Arkins at once stepped forward and got his hand-shake and

yellow eagle. The other men followed in prompt succession, each of the strike advocates departing homeward, or to his work in the foundry, with a suggestion of shame in his heart that he had ever thought and said hard things against Marcus Hadley.

“Hardicorn, John,” called Foreman Hill, as he read down the list.

“Hardicorn’s not here,” somebody in the crowd answered. “His wife died yesterday.”

“His wife died,” repeated Hadley. “My daughter must look into that at once. However, here, you, Harrison,—take this to Hardicorn, as you go home. Here’s two tens for him—double allowance, boys, you know; because there’s death in the family.”

The roll was called through without further break; and three hundred and ninety-nine of Marcus Hadley’s workmen went home or back to their posts in the mills feeling they had somehow misunderstood and unintentionally wronged a really good man.

And there was joy that day in the homes of the poor of Hadleyton, and such a merry Christmas had never before been known.

ATTENTION!

Every employee of the foundry, mills, and machine shops is requested to be present at a meeting to be held in the big casting-shed at half-past ten o’clock, Monday morning, January 1, New Year’s Day.

Mr. Hadley wishes to address the men on a matter of some importance to them.

No excuse for absence from this meeting, except sickness or death in the family, will be accepted.

HARMON HILL,
Foreman.

Copies of this notice were posted in conspicuous places about the foundry plant the day following Christmas.

"I wonder what we're in for now?" queried Timothy Anderson to a work-mate, as they stood reading the poster. "I hope the 'old man' hasn't changed his mind again."

"The thing's to wait and see," resignedly responded the other, with a tone of ill-concealed anxiety.

And there was repressed apprehension throughout the entire plant. Some of the men sought explanation from the sub-foremen, and they, in turn, from the foreman-in-chief. But the foreman-in-chief was as much at sea as the men.

However, the momentous Monday (New Year's Day) came. The men early gathered under the big shed, anxious to have the thing over with, whatever it should prove to be.

On this occasion Hadley mounted the improvised rostrum used the previous Monday, with a roll of papers under his arm. Having called the men to order, without preface, he announced:

"Boys, I've decided to take you—one and all—into this firm. The business is getting so big that one head and one pair of hands can't run it. I need advice and other assistance from men of thorough practice—

as nearly all of you are. So I've made the Hadleyton Iron and Steel Works a stock concern. I've cut the stock up into ten thousand shares of \$100 each. Now, to-day, I'm going to give each of you a certificate for one share—and I want every man in this plant to hereafter feel he's a part of the firm, and plan and work to save time and material and make this foundry the most prosperous in America. And when next New Year's Day arrives, if we're all alive, we'll meet here and vote ourselves a fat dividend out of the profits, as a New Year's gift. And then I'll issue to each of you, who have been with us a year or more, another share. And we'll do the same the following year—and so on, and so on. So that, at the end of twenty-five years, you boys'll own the whole concern, and I'll be retired on the interest of my money. But don't any of you think I'm too generous in thus turning the business over to you. Twenty-five years is a long while, boys; and it'll be some time before you can lock me out entirely. Besides, I'll always have plenty to 'keep the wolf from the door.' Now, as Foreman Hill calls the roll, I want each man to step up here and get his certificate of partnership in this company. And may God bless and prosper the new corporation."

Every man of the four hundred (John Hardicorn among them) left the shed that day carrying a beautifully printed parchment bearing a dollar mark, a figure 1 and two naughts in large golden type across its face. If each man felt an inch taller, who could blame him? He could sell that certificate any day for over \$100;

and, furthermore, wasn't he now in business for himself — his own employer, as it were?

At the Hadleyton Iron and Steel Works the roar and hiss and splutter of the big furnaces continued unabated, day and night; the ponderous machinery in the rolling mills rumbled and grumbled; the hammers and anvils in the machine-shops rang in cheerful chorus; the men whistled merrily on their way to and from their work; their good wives sang snatches of familiar song as they set in order the cosy homes, and the neatly clad, well-fed children, on their way to and from school, shouted and laughed for very lightness of heart.

Good times came to Hadleyton and the country at large; and Marcus Hadley and his four hundred partners in business prospered as never before.

Over at the Hardicorn home the bare, ill-furnished, narrow kitchen gave place to a comfortable cottage, with a spacious grassy lawn in front and a generous productive garden in the rear. Little Tillie grew to young womanhood, and so well assumed the duties of the home that her father and the boys, in a measure, ceased to miss the kindly care of the dead mother's hands. John Hardicorn himself was in time appointed a foreman at twice the wages he had formerly received; and the boys, as they grew strong enough, were given work in the foundry under their father. So that, with the doubled earnings of the father and his annual increase in both dividends and stock in the coöperative

corporation, added to the wages of the boys, there was plenty and to spare.

The prosperity and cheer in the Hardicorn home had their counterpart in the abode of every employee in the great iron and steel plant, and all came to have an abiding honour and respect for Marcus Hadley.

But to this hour the men have not ceased to wonder why the works were not shut down on that Christmas Day, ten years ago, as was ordered.

For the habitually taciturn iron-master has never said aught to any man concerning the great white tables of stone with these words graven thereon :

BUT HE THAT MAKETH HASTE TO BE RICH
SHALL NOT BE INNOCENT.

THE END.

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